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to which she had belonged before her marriage, and in particular sent some of her children to her parents to be cared for until adolescence. In this way a web of affinal ties was built up, cutting across both the residential and age-set systems and acting against the fissile tendencies in the former.[47]

The ties that bound a man to his age-mates and to his matrilateral kin cut across those linking him to his lord and to his dependants. Nevertheless, it seems probable that even without this arrangement of cross-cutting ties, the segmentary system itself was not easily fissile. The State as a whole was primarily held together by its enemies, the external enemies who made it unsafe for small bodies of Ngoni to venture across the no-man's-land on their own, and the internal rivals who competed for the Paramount Chief's favour and who bided their time until they could lead off their major segments as independent states. The flexibility of the system allowed men to achieve power within it, and provided a way of balancing the interests of different groups, as well as making possible the few instances of fission that did occur. The Paramount Chief was powerful, not only because of his mystical attributes and of the military successes of his people, but because he was the government. Through him the common interests of the tribe as a whole were expressed in an organized manner as against the interests of minority groups. Despite its segmentary form, Ngoni society was a State.

In later years two changes took place which increased the stability of the State, at least from a short-term point of view. In the first place, the external environment altered due to the penetration into the central African hinterland by Arabs, Portuguese and British. With this topic we shall deal in Chapter III. The second change, which seems to have taken place among the Ngoni of northern Nyasaland, was in the internal organization of the State. In that particular group, neighbouring tribes were brought under subjection as political groups, not as individuals, and the conquered peoples were either allowed to retain their own chiefs as subordinate rulers or else were attached in large batches to various important headquarters. A distinction emerged between the aristocracy and the conquered peoples, and the army was no longer simply the aggregation of age-sets but included quasi-professionals supplied by a near-by unconquered Cewa chief Mwase Kasungu, who were armed with guns. Similar changes may well have taken place among the Ngoni groups in Tanganyika, who were more closely involved with the slave trade to the coast

[47] See the discussion of affinal linking in my *Marriage*, pp. 10-11.

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than were the groups further inland. However, the evidence suggests that no great changes of this kind took place among the Fort Jameson group under Mpezeni, and it is therefore with changes in the external environment of the State that we shall be chiefly concerned.

In this early period, between 1821 and about 1885, there was for most of the time a situation in which the forces attaching people to the State were stronger than those tending to split it. The age-set system, the web of affinal ties, the attachment of segment members to their lord, the reliance of a lord on the support of his dependants, and the external opposition of all non-Ngoni, these all held the State together. Shifts in the balance of power could be made without disrupting the State because the State was continually expanding, and expansion gave it flexibility. The weakest links in the State were at the top, and it was these that were most strained as the State grew in numbers and in degree of segmentation. Under critical conditions, as on the death of the Paramount Chief or when the need for food necessitated a move from one tribal site to another, these were the links that gave way and fresh independent States were formed. Fission in the State led to consolidation of ties in each divergent group, but the same processes leading to further fission began again at once.

During the period of migration the Ngoni flourished. They were successful brigands on the march. Yet they were brigands in a poor land, and despite their military successes their economy remained one of subsistence cultivation, even though others did some of the cultivation for them. They were well organized for war and their enemies were not, but both they and their enemies were poor people relying on shifting cultivation with a poor technology and with access to only moderately valuable natural resources. The hinterland of Africa provided the Ngoni with an area within which they could operate successfully, but this area was bounded by the lands of wealthier and mightier peoples. Towards the end of the century the boundaries of the area began to contract. The Ngoni found themselves in conflict not with subsistence cultivators using hoes and spears, but with peoples using writing and guns and possessing apparently limitless resources of cloth, beads and gunpowder. We now have to turn to the story of the Ngoni struggle with these Arab and European invaders.

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Chapter Three

DEFEAT

1. Structural change 2. Portugal or Britain 3. Concession hunters 4. European consolidation 5. Friction 6. Fighting 7. Cattle 8. The end of a system

1. *Structural change*

178 619 64 THE STRUGGLES of the Ngoni during the middle of the nineteenth century were with groups of roughly the same character as themselves. The processes at work in the Ngoni social system were in the main repetitive. The State grew in size, split, and grew again, but it was still largely the same kind of State as before. Even though there were important differences between the Ngoni and their opponents, particularly after 1835, those whom they encountered were sufficiently like themselves to be absorbed into the system without difficulty. In the nomenclature of Radcliffe-Brown and the Wilsons, there was social circulation in the Ngoni State but little change in its structural form.[1] For this reason we have been concerned in our analysis so far with but few of the historical details of that period, and have dealt with history only in an abstract and generalized form. Many of the inconsistencies between various versions of the tribal legend have not been [114] significant. For example, Chief Ciwele Ndhlovu of Dowa broke off from the main body of Ngoni, according to some writers before, and according to others after, the split between Mpezeni and Mwambera.[2] It does not matter for our particular purpose which of these versions is correct, for we are here concerned only to establish that from time to time senior lieutenants did split off with their segments to form independent chiefdoms. This process, of which Ciwele's secession is an example, was essentially the same before and after the Mpezeni-Mwambera split.

648 178 12 After 1880 Ngoni history entered a new phase, and social processes began to operate which were not repetitive. Changes began to occur in the form of the Ngoni social field, for instead of interacting with groups similar to themselves, the Ngoni became involved in a much wider network of social relations. This change

[1] Radcliffe-Brown, 'On social structure', p. 4; Wilson, *Social change*, p. 58.
[2] cf. Chibambo, *My Ngoni*, pp. 32-3; Winterbottom, 'Histories', p. 18; Wiese, 'Geschichte', p. 186.

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between rival heirs even while the occupant of the throne was still alive. The brothers Cetshwayo and Mbuyazi fought for the heirship while their father Mpande was still chief.[95]

The apparent ineffectiveness of Mpezeni's rule may well have been due to the increasing segmentation of the State as it expanded and to the growing differentiation of interest between one major segment and another. As it happened, there was no civil war and the tribe did not split, at least not in these terms. A cleavage in the royal house did reveal itself later, in 1903, after British rule had begun, when Madzimawi tried to take the name of Zwangendaba and was opposed by the supporters of Mpezeni II, son of Nsingu. But by then the form of the State was already determined by political forces other than the balanced opposition of segments. It is significant of the changed situation that Madzimawi did not send his armed followers against the new Mpezeni to challenge his succession. Instead he applied to the Native Commissioner for permission to take the name of his grandfather.[96]

Instead of dividing in civil war the whole country united against the European interlopers. Mpezeni alone tried to protect his friend Wiese. The effective cleavage was not between rival heirs but between the Paramount Chief and his people. He was now a man in his sixties who seemed not to want war and who perhaps benefited more than his people from the presents made by Europeans. The Ngoni people continued to believe and teach that fighting was the proper occupation for men. An attempt to exploit this cleavage was made in 1897 when Wiese, perhaps remembering his earlier attempt to serve Portugal and Britain simultaneously, offered his services to the B.S.A. Company. Forbes thought that if Wiese was given troops, he would be supported by Mpezeni, who would then be in a position to hold Nsingu and the Ngoni warriors in check.[97] But this plan was overtaken by events.

We saw in the previous chapter that the organization of the State was based on warfare, not only on war as an activity bringing prestige to successful warriors but also on war as a method of recruitment to the ever-widening segments of the residential system. Without warfare to eliminate the unsuccessful and to bring promotion and dependants to those who survived, the system could not keep going. It was in no sense inevitable that the Fort Jameson Ngoni and the British should fight; we have only to turn to the

[95] Gluckman, 'Kingdom of the Zulu', pp. 35-6, and *Malinowski's Sociological Theories*, pp. 19-20; Krige, *Social system of the Zulu*, p. 19.
[96] See pp. 139*f*.
[97] Poole, *Native tribes*, p. 14.

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the same processes we have seen at work in the formation of segments. Those villages are linked which have a common origin, and the mechanism of dispersal is still the same as in pre-conquest times. Sons of a headman still break out of their natal village and lieutenants and others move off to make their own villages. However, with the decline in polygyny, fewer new villages arise from the formation of new bands of wives by a headman.

Secondly, the village has become more important than before, and village membership is now critical in a wide variety of situations. Thirdly, because it has become easier to move from one village to another than to form a new village, the genealogical structure of the village has become highly diversified as compared with segments of similar size in the old system.

Thus, the transition has been from a State based on a continuously segmenting political system to a minor unit of administration in a modern State. The new order has grown out of the old, not as the result of any professed policy of preserving indigenous forms of political organization, but because the aims of the Administration were essentially conservative, because it was concerned with preserving order in the country as cheaply as possible and did not wish to introduce economic and political changes which would conflict with the supply of labour to other areas scheduled for earlier development; and because for the most part those individuals who occupied powerful positions in the old régime were best able to survive in the struggle for power which determined the eventual form of the new. Therefore, although their entry into the colonial empire was so much more abrupt than that of their matrilineal neighbours, the political system to which Ngoni are now subject bears many more superficial similarities to its former condition than is the case among the Cewa and others. The changes have been great, as we have seen, but the symbols and names remain, with changed significance, to remind Ngoni of their past.

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guish them from their neighbours are no more significant than the many varieties of custom and belief which are to be found in every Ngoni village. They do not form a group among themselves, their members participate in all communal activities in their counties and are to be found at all levels of the Native Authority organization below that of chief. They are linked by kinship to their neighbours. The two Nyasaland counties, however, include relatively large areas where there are only Cewa-speaking villages, and many of these claim that they have been placed under Ngoni rule only by Administrative action. From time to time they have made efforts to break away and to attach themselves to some neighbouring Cewa chief or to establish a separate chiefdom. There appears to be a sharp distinction between the Ngoni chiefs, with the villages in their county segments, and their Cewa-speaking subjects. It will be remembered that the two Nyasaland chiefdoms represent the head of the eastern movement of Mpezeni's group, and that some of the settlement across the border took place as late as 1897. It is not surprising therefore that in these two counties assimilation of Cewa captives and immigrants has not proceeded so far as in the longer established counties in Northern Rhodesia.

11. *Conclusion*

In this study we have attempted to show what has happened in Ngoni political life during a period of 130 years. To-day Ngoni society is changing but this has not always been so. Prior to the arrival of Wiese in 1886, the actually existing social relations were changing, but the form of the social structure remained the same. Each new segment developed along lines that were already known and each time the State split, the new States were copies of the old. A system of this kind could not have lasted for long, for the supply of new recruits to the Ngoni States must have sooner or later been exhausted. In Africa, even if the overall conditions facilitated the emergence of this kind of migratory militarism, they were particularly unfavourable for its prolonged continuation. The Arabs and the European Powers behind them were closing in on the centre of Africa, and Ngoni days were numbered. Then came the defeat of the Ngoni in 1898 and the emergence of a new system, in which some of the actually existing political groups, and the relations between them, appear to have a much greater stability than before. But at the same time society as a whole has become much more diversified, the spatial distribution of men and women in significant relationship with one another has become highly complicated, and

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178 631 new external factors are operating. There has been a change in the scale of social relationships, and Ngoni men and women form part of a large-scale society in which events in one distant part of the system affect events in another part. The history and analysis of this change lies largely outside the scope of this study, and we have restricted ourselves to the way in which the political system of the tribe has adapted itself and been adapted in the changing society. [64] The Ngoni sovereign State has become more and more like a rural district council in a backward area; foreign policy has given place [557] to Native policy; social mobility has been restricted to the lowest caste in a plural society; and the great warrior chief has become in effect the only member of the Administration who never goes home [643] to Britain on leave. But in the eyes of his people, the Paramount Chief still belongs to the Ngoni, and not to the Administration.

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the absence of any definite internal land boundaries between the territories of one political segment and another. The constant elements were the residential groups that we now know as villages,[1] and we may liken them to ships of different sizes and importance that preserve a loose formation while the fleet sails from place to place. Villages, discrete clusters of dwellings in comparative proximity and separated from one another by uninhabited stretches of garden-land and bush, were internally divided into divisions,[2] and from time to time these divisions broke away from one another or from their parent village to form new villages of their own. This process of divisional fission was characteristic of the commoner villages. Royal villages were usually formed by a parallel process by which an important member of the royal lineage established a new village for one or more of his queens by recruitment from his own natal village. The eldest son by the senior queen in that village then became the head of the segment of the royal lineage associated with the village. Thus the segmentation of the royal lineage was reflected in a proliferation of royal villages.

In the period immediately prior to the conquest of the tribe by British forces in 1898, there were four important royal villages, with populations of probably several thousands each. One belonged to a brother of Mpezeni, and the other three were controlled by groups of Mpezeni's own queens and their sons. Associated with each royal village were several regional governors, each of whom was responsible for the well-being of a group of lesser villages, and who resided among them in a village of his own. These lesser villages were commoner villages, each under its own headman. Each large royal village had also a number of lesser royal villages attached to it, and also many commoner villages were attached to a royal village of some sort directly, and not through a regional governor.[3]

Each important person, chief, member of the royal lineage, regional governor, or headman was assisted by a number of lieutenants, trusted subordinates who were usually not patrilineal kinsmen of their principal but who were sometimes related affinally. These lieutenants were ranked in order of the creation of their posts by their principal and assisted him in the control of his unit of administration. In the case of Mpezeni himself, however, there were two kinds of lieutenants. Those people known as the lieutenants of Mpezeni were

[1] *Mzusi*, pl. *mizusi*.
[2] *Cigawo*, pl. *vigawo*.
[3] Cf. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, p. 66, for a similar system among the Swazi.

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64 charged by him with specific functions relating to the State as a whole, and appear to have exercised general jurisdiction. Other lieutenants were known as the lieutenants of such-and-such a royal village, and were appointed by Mpezeni to look after the queens of the village and to be responsible for the internal ordering of the village.

In addition to these lieutenants each important person had a deputy,[1] who was a patrilineal kinsman of the same generation. Each new holder of the principal office selected his own deputy. The deputy's task was to act for his principal in his absence and to serve as an intermediary between the principal and his lieutenants.

[611] [558] All these posts were hereditary in the agnatic line, except for that of deputy, but new posts were continually being created and the holders of other posts fell into disgrace. Some of the lieutenants of Mpezeni were also headmen of their own villages, while other lieutenants were promoted to be regional governors.

631 178 161 Increase in population led to increase in the number of villages and of recognizable divisions within villages, both by divisional fission and by the setting up of separate establishments for groups of wives. This process, operating in response to population pressure from below, was assisted from above by the need to give newly created lieutenants and governors their own dependants and their own recognizable residential cluster.

631 641 The relative position and importance of a segment of the political structure might alter if its leader was killed in battle or if he offended the Paramount. For example, a certain lieutenant who had a village of his own committed adultery with one of Mpezeni's queens. He was [684] put to death, and all his followers were made to come and live in a 641 royal village. But in addition to the natural increase in the population 727 of any segment, new members were added by capture in war. There 563 was never any distinct class of slaves or captives in the Ngoni State. [567] Apart from the aristocratic families which traced their history back to the pre-migration period in Natal, the rest of the tribe had been either captured at one time or other on the way north, or had joined the Ngoni of their own volition. On capture, people were assigned to some or other important person, and after a while acquired a certain 563 autonomy of their own. The men were all enrolled into the age-set 641 regiment appropriate to their age, and it was possible for them to rise 701 to high positions in the State. No distinction of ethnic origin was

[1] *M'nawe*, pl. *enawe*. Cf. the Zulu term *nunawe*, younger brother who is next to the heir.

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sometimes held at the Paramount Chief's village. Each minor chief holds meetings for the people in his own county to discuss matters of common interest. 647

Quarrels among the chiefs are mainly in terms of the traditional norms rather than of the new differentiation between them in the Native Authority system. The Paramount Chief may abuse the minor chiefs for not coming to visit him on his return from a journey, or for not bringing beer with them when they come to visit him. In each county there are villages which claim to belong to the chief of some other county, on the ground that they originated from the capital village of that county. These interloping villages increase the pressure on the land of the county in which they are, and friction between the two chiefs concerned may ensue. The chiefs like to be able to offer new land for gardens to the people of their own villages, yet at the same time each chief likes to have as many villages as possible apparently under his sway. Hence there is competition both for the allegiance of the villagers as well as for the land that they occupy. These struggles may be resolved by the Paramount Chief or by the Administration with a redefinition of boundaries or by moving the interloping villages to some other region. The Administration has from time to time placed one county under the tutelage of the chief of another, on grounds of administrative efficiency or the inexperience of a young chief. These moves are interpreted as attempts by one chief to incorporate the county of the other into his own, and allegations of killing by sorcery may be made against one minor chief on the death of another. Attempts have also been made to usurp the paramountcy, but this cannot be done openly under the present régime. 628 [643] [648] [692] [669]

Efforts are also made by members of the royal lineage to achieve the creation of new chieftainships by asserting the traditional autonomy of the rural districts into which the counties are divided for certain purposes. Seen in relation to the old system, these attempts are efforts to increase the segmentation in that branch of the royal lineage which corresponds with the modern county in which they live. It is unlikely that such attempts will be successful, as the policy of the Administration is opposed to the creation of new chieftainships. 631 640

Sanctions

The principal check on the power of the minor chiefs is that exercised through the Paramount. The Administration, which is always 687 648